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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000025

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/WE (MENUTTI); WHA/CAR

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 002/02

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/12

TAGS: [PINR](#) [VT](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO RETURN TO CARACAS
AS FOREIGN MINISTER

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARQE JOSEPH MERANTE, REASON E.O.
12958 1.5 (B,D)

1. (C) IGNACIO QUINTANA, THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE, HOSTED A DINNER IN HONOR OF VATICAN PRIME MINISTER-EQUIVALENT CARDINAL SODANO ON DECEMBER 27. IN ADDITION TO AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON, THE TWELVE GUESTS INCLUDED FOREIGN MINISTER-EQUIVALENT ARCHBISHOP TAURAN, AND PREFECT OF THE PAPAL HOUSEHOLD ARCHBISHOP JAMES HARVEY. DURING THE COURSE OF THE LAVISH DINNER, WHICH WAS HELD IN A PRIVATE ROOM AT THE ST. REGIS GRAND, CONVERSATION TURNED TO THE QUINTANA'S ALREADY ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY DEPARTURE. THERE WAS OPEN DISCUSSION ON QUINTANA'S RETURN TO CARACAS TO ASSUME THE POST OF FOREIGN MINISTER.

2. (C) AT PAPAL CEREMONY ON JANUARY 1, QUINTANA APPROACHED AMBASSADOR AND TOLD HIM THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VENEZUELA WILL SOON BECOME MUCH WARMER.

3. (C) COMMENT: DURING HIS YEAR AS AMBASSADOR, QUINTANA HAS BEEN AN ENIGMA. WITHIN THE EXTREMELY RESERVED, CULTURED AMBASSADORIAL CORPS, HE WAS A BACKSLAPPING, GREGARIOUS EXCEPTION. VATICAN OFFICIALS OFTEN SPOKE DESPAIRINGLY OF HIM, AS WELL AS THE POLICIES OF VENEZUELA. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT SODANO, TAURAN, AND HARVEY ALL ATTENDED A DINNER HOSTED BY HIM, DURING A PERIOD IN WHICH

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SOCIAL EVENTS ARE BASICALLY SUSPENDED FOR THE HOLIDAYS, IS A STRONG INDICATION THAT THEY BELIEVE QUINTANA IS SOMEONE THEY WILL NEED IN THE FUTURE.

4. (C) COMMENT CONT: QUINTANA HAS ALSO TAKEN A VERY UNUSUAL STAND IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH AMBASSADOR NICHOLSON AND THE U.S. EMBASSY. DURING ALMOST EVERY ENCOUNTER WITH AMBASSADOR, QUINTANA MAKES AN ALMOST THEATRICAL PRESENTATION ON HOW MUCH HE "LOVES" THE UNITED STATES.
MERANTE

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